



A Critical Study On Nidra

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Abstract-

Ayurveda is the most ancient science of life. As such it is not concerned only to the cure of diseases but also aims to relieve the humanity from all categories of miseries- physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual. Ayurvedic classics give special emphasis on three important values which have been considered as the important conducive factors for maintenance of life and health. This important triune consists of Ahara (food), Nidra (Sleep) and Brahmacharya (Good conduct). These three have been considered as Upastambha or the basis of life and health. Out of the three Upastambhas, Nidra has been given more importance and considered to be the best in Ayurveda. This article is an attempt to present information that is discussed in Ayurveda text related to Nidra (sleep).

Introduction-

Ayurveda is the science of life which includes all the factors which are essential to make man not only healthy but also happy. Acharya Caraka says that life always exist, and so people always try to know about life and medicines and follow the principles of *ayurveda*. The main aim of Ayurveda are 1) स्वस्थस्य स्वास्थ्यरक्षणम् (prevention of disease) 2) आतुरस्य विकार प्रशमनम्। (cure of disease). To fulfill the aim of life (prevention of disease) of Ayurveda, the theory of triupastambha has great place, as acharya caraka says that ahara, nidra and bramhacharya are the three upastambhas of life and play a key role in the maintenance of health and long life span¹. Being supported by these three upastambhas, the body is endowed with strength, complexion, and growth up till the full life span. But when a person is indulged in unwholesome behavior or ignorance of health principles, three upastambhas cannot perform their functions successfully.

Among three upastambhas ahara is mainly related with physical factors and Bramhacharya is mainly related with mental factors while nidra has psychosomatic approach. These three are designated as upastambha of life because they support tri- stambhas(vata, pitta and kapha) of the body. Vata, pitta and kapha are altered and disturbed if three upastambhas are detrimental and which may lead to origination of various disorders. Theory of trayopstambh is one of the important principles in preventive medicine as because if in wholesome way these upastambhas are observed, there is no possibility of generation of diseases. Among trayopstambhas nidra affects both the factors, physical and mental equally. It is one of the life maintaining factors and if not used properly several fatal diseases may produce. But if it is practiced according to prescribed regiment it provides 'sukh' which is considered as arogya (disease free state) in ayurvedic classics. Nidra has been considered as brihana factors (nourishing factors) in routine life means it promotes health by nourishing dhatus² and increasing kapha which is responsible for the strength and immunity of the

body as well as mind. Increased kapha promotes physical health and immunity are promoted by sthiritra(stability), snigdhatra(unctuousness) and guruta(heaviness) while mental health and immunity are promoted by kshama(forgiveness), dhrit(steadiness) and *Alobha* (contentment), which are the functions of kapha in normal state³ on the other hand, nidra also promotes health by increasing shukra dhatu, essence of the body and the same affects as like kapha.

Nidra in vedic literature –

Literally the meaning of veda is knowledge and knowledge of god. Veda is eternal just like gravitation. Secondly, the term veda is applied to the four great works like rigveda, yajurveda, samveda and atharveda. The word 'swapa', 'shayana' which are synonyms of nidra are seen at various places in Vedas and Upanishads.

In the former most Rig-Veda, it is suggested that arrangement in city/town/country should be maintained as all the persons can be slept comfortably. Means there should be no danger of thieves and decoits.⁴ It is also said when sunset in the evening all living beings, which are tired by the whole day working, are slept comfortably.⁵ It is further said in other words that arrangement of the city or country should be excellent as women can also be slept in courtyard without fear, in passage or in vehicles during journey without fear. it is also advised that women should use perfume and then go to sleep on comfortable bed at night⁶. In Yajurveda it is prayed to God Agni that "you have to awake thoroughly because we shall sleep here comfortably and take rest". Furthermore, you have to perfect us in night without carelessness and wake up us in next morning at the appropriate time⁷. In Samveda, it is prayed to the god sun that "avoid us from such calamity which comes with bad dreams"⁸. In Atharvaveda it is said that "who wants benediction, must utter 5th shukt in night before sleeping"⁹

Upanishad-

The Upanishads are came under gyan khand of vedas. The word Upanishad means 'an approach to the knowledge of the reality, expounded in the books of that name. In Mandukyopanishada, Nidra is considered as ignorance of truth. It is called tama. Origin of nidra is only factor which differentiates jivtma(united with ignoerent nidra) from Paramatma(free from nidra)¹⁰. In Chhandogyopanishada it is said that in susupti(nidra) stage purush is lost in himself, so he is known as in "swapiti" condition, because in this stage purush acquired himself¹¹.

In Prashnopanishad, it is said that the person have devine knowledge when awakened after sleeping, he feels results of all religious sacrifice means he experiences extreme happiness and enjoyment¹². Brahadaranyakyopanishada is given explanation of Bramha with the help of awakened, swapna etc stages¹³. In 4th chapter it is advised by physician that sleeping person should not awake suddenly or quickly.

NIDRA IN PAURANIC AND EPICAL LITERATURE:-

The term Purana means that which lives from of old or that which is always new though it is old. Puranas are generally based on the vedas. References related to 'sayana', 'swapna' and 'saiyya' (bed) are seen at various places in purush also. In Agni Purana it is advised that an emperor should not sleep in daytime¹⁴. In Bhavishya Purana, there is indication that a person should sleep after experiencing auspicious dreams¹⁵. In Bramha Purana, Saint Kapil was tired by day-night awakening. God gives him blessing and that is why Saint Kapil slept in hades¹⁶. In Bramha-vaivarata purana description about bad dreams of Kansa is found¹⁷(also bad dreams and its management are described widely in another chapter¹⁸. In Matasya -purana, reference a

chapter named bad dreams experience of maya is found¹⁹ In Kurma-Purana God Kurma Has stated that "at previous time I was in the form of Narayana I was at the bed of 'sesa'(snake) with the help of long sleep. at the end of night, I thought about universe, after awakening then I felt happiness"²⁰. In Padma purana, it is stated that swan birds are contented by drinking extract of lotus and fluttering their wings. Such swan birds experienced sleep²¹. In Vamana purana, description regarding sleep and bed found²².

Epics-

Mahabharata is the biggest epic of world. A description about dreams indicating defeat and misfortune by Karna is found²³. A reference is found that Arjun worshipped God Shiva in dream and at another place he got pasupatastra (a type of celestial weapon) in dream²⁴. Nidra, suspti & salvation are discussed briefly in the chapter named "Moksha Dharma Parva". Ramayama is another epic of Hindu culture. There is a description about "Kusa Saiya"(when Lord Rama went to forest, he slept at the bed made up of kusa²⁵. In the Uttarakhanda, a detailed description about dormitory or sayanagara of Kumbhakarana is given²⁶.

NIDRA IN DARSANIK A LITERATURE:-

Darsan - means looking or sight. It also means the eye, the mirror and knowledge especially religious. In vedant system of physiology "swapa" and "swapna" words are come at different places. In the explanation of susupti stage, it is stated that when purush is become identical to paramatma and immersed in paramatma, that particular stage is known as susupti.²⁷ Here, all the discussion about swapna indicates the experiencing dreams is delusion and false knowledge²⁸ The word "swapna" is also come in Nyaya system of philosophy and considered as false knowledge as world. Actually Swapna is used for the discussion about pramana and prameya²⁹In yoga system of philosophy nidra is described as a stage of mana and included in five stages i.e. Vritti of mana i.e pramana (equipment of knowledge), viparyaya (false knowledge), vikalpa(doubt or uncertainty), nidra (sleep) and smriti(memory)³⁰.

NIDRA IN AYURVEDIC LITERATURE:-

Ayurveda is upaveda of Atharvaveda. In Ayurveidic classics, nidra is considered as second uastambha among trayopastambha.

The word nidra has following meanings according to different dictionaries-

- 1) Vachaspatyama- sayana, swapne, tatwapatibodhe, Abhavapratyayalambnyam, vrittau
- 2) shabdakalpadrum- medhyamanaha samayoag, iti jagdish, susuptavastha, swanyavastha
- 3)Amarkosha- sayana, swapa, swapna, samvesa
- 4) vaidyaka shabda sindhu- swapi
- 5) sanskrit Hindi dictionary by V.S, Apte- suptavastha, Nind, sithilala, Aakhayan mudra, kali ki Avastha
- 6) Sanskrit-English dictionary by V.S. Apte- sleep, sleepiness, sloth, shutting, bidding state

As per Acharya caraka, nidra is a condition in which mana including indriyas dissociate themselves from their objects. According to aharya susruta nidra is ralated to God Vishnu, it is sinful and encroaches upon all

living beings by nature³¹. . Acharya Vagbhat has said that nidra is produced from tamas at the time of commencement of the creation. It is another form of tamas itself and manifest when tama is predominant, generally at night.

PHYSIOLOGY OF NIDRA-

According to acharya Caraka, when the mana including indriyas is exhausted and thus they dissociate themselves from their objects, the individual sleeps³². When the mana (as well as the soul) gets exhausted or becomes inactive and the gyanendriyas and karmendriyas become inactive then the individual gets sleep. Acharya Susruta said about the physiology of nidra that hridaya is the seat of chetna in living being. When this is invaded by tamo guna, persons are subjected to nidra. Tamoguna is the cause of sleep and satva guna is the cause of awakening but overall, nature itself is more dominant cause³³. Acharya Caraka explained physiology of nidra that when srotas of the body become covered by kapha, then the body is fatigued by exertion and when the sense organs are not functioning, nidra manifests in the body³⁴.

TYPES OF NIDRA-

Acharya Caraka has classified nidra in following manner according to causes-³⁵.

- Tamobhava- caused by tama.
- Slesmasamudbhava- caused by vitiated kapha .
- Manah-sarir srama saambha- caused by mental and mental exertion.
- Agantuki-indicative of bad prognosis leading imminent death.
- Vyadhi-anuvartini- caused as a complication of other disease like Sannipataja jwara etc.
- Ratri-swabhava prabhava- caused by the very nature of the night.

Acharya Dalhana has classified nidra into three types on the basis of Susruta Samhita like-Tamsi- when sangyavaha srotas become filled with slesma dominated by tamoguna, tamsi nidra is produced³⁶.

- Swabhaviki- this type of nidra occurs naturally and dairy in all living beings.
- Vaikariki-if there is any disturbance in mana and body, nidra does not occur. But if nidra is occurred, it is vaikariki nidra.

Acharya Vagbhat has classified in seven types as following manner³⁷.

1. Kalaswabhawaj- it is produces at the accustomed time. i.e. nights
2. Amayaja- it is produced due to effect of diseases.
3. By fatigue of mana- when mana is exhausted
4. By fatigue of sharir- when body is exhausted
5. Shleshmaprabhavaj- it is produced due to predominance of kapha
6. Agantuka- this type of nidra is produced by external factors e.g. traumatic etc.
7. Tamobhava- it is produced by predominance of tamoguna³⁸

IMPORTANCE OF NIDRA-

According to Caraka, sukha, dukha, pusti, karshya, bala, abala, vrushata, klibata, gnyanam, agnyana (ignorance), jivana and death all these occur depending on the proper or improper nidra³⁹. Acharya Susruta has said that by using proper and adequate nidra, the person will be free from diseases, will have a pleasure

in mind endowed with strength, color or complexion and virility⁴⁰. Acharya Vagbhata has said when nidra is observed judiciously, it will lead to happiness and long life just as the mind of the yogies become clear from knowledge of the soul and penance⁴¹. According to acharya Bhavamishra nidra is best for alleviating pitta dosh⁴². According to Bhavaprakasha when nidra is used after meal, it mitigates vata and pitta, while increases kapha. It stauts the body and brings comfort⁴³. Acharya Kashyapa has accepted that comfortable nidra is essential for milk production in mother⁴⁴

NIDRA AS AN ADHARANIYA VEGA-

Acharya Caraka has described about non suppressible urges in sutrasthana chapter seven. He has included nidra in 13 non suppressible urges⁴⁵. He has further said that various type of disease occur by the suppression of these urges. Acharya Susruta has accepted generation of 13 types of udavarta by the suppression of these non-suppressible urges mentioned by Caraka⁴⁶. Acharya Caraka has also mentioned 6 types of udavarta by the suppression of these urges but he did not include nidra among those⁴⁷.

NIDRA AS A THERAPY-

Carakacharya has described nidra in Astauninditiyadyay where eight types of undesirable constitutions from the treatment point of view are mentioned. Among them Atisthaulya And Atikrisha are especially undesirable constitutions because they are always suffer with any disease. He has said that atisthula and atikrisha purusa are to be treated by karshana and bringhana therapies respectively⁴⁸). Nidra is included under brihana factors. That is why nidra is described here as a therapy in the management of karshya roga.⁴⁹

CONCLUSION-

- Nidra is one of the important upastambhas of life.
- It plays great role in prevention of the disease which are produced due to improper nidra.
- It promotes health when it is used as precribed regimen.
- According to rules and regimen, nidra should be used and taken seriously.
- We must use nidra as a therapy in some diseases.

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